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Genuine Puerto Rican Recipes

(Specially prepared for the "Consumer Time" program of April 29, 1944)

Puerto Rican cookery though it has a "personality" all its own has borrowed many of its flavor combinations from the culinary art of Old Spain, the early Borinquen Indians, and from favorite dishes of neighboring Caribbean Islands. Puerto Rican cooking is unusually flavorful, but is not particularly highly seasoned. Though many of the native dishes are made with Island-grown vegetables, such as plantains, tanniers, breadfruit, dasheens, and other crops native to the warm climate of the Caribbean, the tasty dishes can also be made with products available at the corner grocery store.

These recipes are all authentic Puerto Rican favorites. It will be noted that many of the recipes call for a "sofrito," which is a combination of chopped ham, bacon, onions, peppers, tomatoes, and a small amount of garlic sauteed together and added to the other basic ingredients. Garlic plays a prominent role in many Puerto Rican dishes, but its use is optional and the amount may vary according to personal taste.

Rice is Puerto Rico's number one food. Hence the many rice recipes and Puerto Rico's favorite "rice and beans," a dish served at least once or twice a day in every Island home.

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CARNE MECHADA

(Spiced Larded Meat with Potatoes)

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|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| 2 ounces ham | 1/8 teaspoon pepper |
| 2 ounces bacon | 2 pounds rump or lamb |
| 3 ounces onion (1 large) | 2 cups hot water |
| 1 clove garlic | 1-1/2 pounds potatoes |
| 1-1/2 tablespoon salt | 1/2 cup tomato sauce |
| 2 ounces fat | 1/4 teaspoon marjoram |
| 1/4 cup olives if desired | leaves if desired |

Chop and mix ham and bacon, onion and olives. Grind and add garlic and marjoram leaves. Make several diagonal incisions in the meat with a sharp-pointed knife along the grain of the cut. Lard with above mixture. Fry meat in fat; when brown on both sides add water, salt and potatoes cut in half. Cook until tender. Slice meat and serve with potatoes and gravy.

Serves eight.

The Spanish way of cooking meats is not simple frying or broiling so popular in the United States. The cooking of meats is apt to be a long process. Most meats are either stewed or prepared as pot roasts.

PESCADO EN ESCABECHE

(Pickled Fish)

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|---------------|-----------------------------------|
| 2 pounds fish | 10 peppercorns |
| 1 cup olives | 4 cups oil (preferably olive oil) |
| 2 onions | 1 cup vinegar (mild) |
| Bay leaves | |
- Salt

Cut fish in slices, dry and season with salt. Fry in oil. Slice onions and fry with peppercorns, bay leaves and olives. The vinegar is then added to the oil and all ingredients are poured over the fried fish. The quantities of oil and vinegar may be varied to taste. This pickled fish will keep for some time if covered tightly in a preserving jar and placed in the refrigerator.

Haddock, shad, sawfish or snapper may be used.

Serves 10.

Fish pickled Puerto Rican style may be used as an appetizer or served with lettuce as a side dish.

ARROZ A LA JARDINERA

(Rice Jardinniere)

1/2 pound dried soybeans	1 pepper
1/2 pound string beans	1 onion
and carrots	1 clove garlic
2 ounces ham	1 large tomato
1 ounce bacon or fat pork	2 tablespoons lard
1/2 pound yellow squash	3 cups rice
or pumpkin	1/2 pound cabbage
Sprig parsley	

Put soybeans to soak overnight. Cook for about one hour. Add the string beans and the carrots (diced). Sauté finely chopped ham and bacon, add onion, pepper, garlic, and tomato well chopped. Cook for a few minutes. To the vegetable mixture add the rice and oil. Add the soybeans, string beans and carrot mixture and season to taste with salt and pepper. Add the remaining vegetables (squash, cabbage, and parsley). Cook over a low flame until the rice is done.

Serves eight.

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ASOPAO DE POLLO

(Chicken and Rice Sunday Style)

1 small chicken (2 pounds)	1 sprig parsley
1 pound rice	2 ounces ham
5 cups hot water (Approximately)	2 ounces bacon
3 tablespoons fat	4 teaspoons salt
1 large tomato	1 green pepper
1 clove garlic	1 onion
if desired - 8 olives	
2 tablespoons capers	
annatto coloring	
tomato sauce	

Dress chicken and cut in pieces as for frying. Melt fat in an iron kettle or earthenware pot. Cube and add ham and bacon. Chop or grind ham, bacon, tomato, green pepper, onion, garlic and parsley and add to ham and bacon, allowing the mixture to brown lightly. Add the chicken and cook for a few minutes. Add the water and simmer until the chicken is almost tender. Then add the well-washed rice and cook over a low flame until done (approximately 30 minutes). Garnish with peas and strips of pimento.

Serves six to eight.

This is the typical Puerto Rican "company" dish and is served in the same vessel in which it was cooked. It is a one-dish meal. It is usually accompanied by a salad, dessert, and coffee.

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FLAN DE BATATA

(Baked Sweetpotato Custard)

2 pounds sweetpotatoes	2 cups milk
1 - 1-1/2 cup sugar	5 - 6 eggs
Vanilla or lemon rind	Salt

Boil sweetpotatoes and mash. Add well beaten yolks. Fold in well beaten whites and add milk slowly until a smooth paste is formed. Add seasoning. Cover inside of a mold with caramelized sugar, pour in mixture and bake as custard.

Allow to cool before removing from mold.

PASTELILLOS

(Puerto Rican Turnovers)

4 cups flour	1 egg
1-1/2 teaspoons salt	1-1/2 cups water or milk
8 tablespoons lard	Lard for deep-fat frying

Sift flour and salt and work in lard as for pie crust. Beat egg and combine with water or milk. Add to flour mixture. Roll dough out thin. Cut in circles the size of a saucer. Place a tablespoonful of grated cheese or meat stuffing in the center of each circle and fold over, pressing edges together with a fork. Fry in deep fat. Serve hot.

Makes about 30 tarts.

Meat filling for turnovers:

1 pound pork	2 tomatoes
12 olives	1 onion
1/4 cup raisins	1 teaspoon salt
1 hard boiled egg	1 ounce bacon
2 ounces ham	2 tablespoons lard

All ingredients are ground or finely chopped except egg and olives. Cook over low flame until meat is done. Then cut egg and olives into small pieces and add to mixture.

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ARROZ GUISADO CON HABICHUELAS

("Tropical Hoppin John")

1 ounce ham	2 cups kidney or navy beans
1/2 ounce salt pork	1 pound rice
1 onion	About 5 cups boiling water
1 tomato	1 tablespoon salt
1 green pepper	2 ounces fat

Cook beans until tender. Make "sofrito" as follows: Cut ham, salt pork, onion, tomato and pepper into small pieces and sauté lightly in the fat. Add beans and cook a few minutes. Wash rice, add to beans and cook for a few minutes longer. Then add rest of fat and the water. Cook slowly until rice is tender and all water is evaporated.

Serves six to eight.

In preparing this dish Puerto Ricans often substitute "gandules" (pigeon peas), "garbanzos" (chick peas), or black beans for the navy and kidney beans.

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CAZUELA

(Puerto Rican Pumpkin Pudding)

2 cups mashed pumpkin	2 tablespoons cinnamon
1 cup sweetpotato (mashed)	1/4 teaspoon nutmeg
3 eggs	1/2 cup sugar
6 tablespoons fat	3/4 cup coconut milk
1/2 teaspoon salt	1/2 cup flour
1 teaspoon baking powder	

Mix all ingredients in the order in which they are given. Pour mixture into a well greased pan and bake for approximately one hour.

Slice and serve cold.

SANCOCHO

(Tropical Stew)

1 pound meat	2 tablespoons fat
1 onion	1 ear sweet corn
2 tomatoes	1 pound potatoes
1 green pepper	1 pound sweetpotatoes
1 sprig parsley	1 bay leaf
1 clove garlic	Plantain (if available)
1 tablespoon salt	other vegetables
2 quarts water	desired

Cut meat into small pieces. Place in water for a half hour then place on fire. Add onion, tomato, pepper, add seasoning herbs. Boil for about an hour or two.

Remove from fire and strain. Add meat to broth. Cut vegetables in small pieces. Cut corn into two or three pieces. Add to broth and let boil slowly until all vegetables are cooked.

The sancocho is served in a soup plate and eaten as soup. It is served as the main dish. Care should be taken to avoid overcooking the vegetables.

Serves eight.

Sancocho as served in Puerto Rico, includes plantain, tannier, and other starchy vegetables. The combination depends on the family's personal tastes.

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ARROZ CON CARNE DE CERDO

(Rice with Pork)

1/2 pound pork	1 green pepper
1 - 1/2 cups rice	3 cups water
1 ounce bacon or pork fat	2 ounces ham
1/8 cup tomato sauce	1/2 tablespoon vinegar
or tomatoes	2 tablespoons fat
Olives, if desired	1 clove garlic
1 onion	1 sprig parsley
1 tablespoon salt	

Melt fat. Make the "sofrito" by chopping and sautéing ham and bacon, then adding chopped onion, garlic and green pepper and cooking for a few minutes. Cube and add the pork and one cup of the water. Add all other ingredients except rice and cook for 30 minutes. Put in well-washed rice and remaining water and cook very slowly until rice is done.

Serves six.

This recipe may be varied by using other meats or fish in place of the pork.

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POLVO DE AMOR

(Love Dust)

Grated coconut
Sugar

For every cup of grated coconut add 3/4 cup of granulated sugar. Place in a frying pan or iron kettle. Cook over low flame until mixture turns light brown. Be sure to stir constantly so that mixture will not burn. After it cools store away in well covered jars. It is served as prepared or over ice cream, custard, etc.

HABICHUELAS GUISADAS Y ARROZ BLANCO

(Rice and Beans - Puerto Rico's Native Dish)

1 pound kidney beans	1 tomato
2 quarts water	1 green pepper
1 ounce ham	1 clove garlic
1/2 ounce salt pork	1 tablespoon salt
1 onion	1 sprig parsley
2 tablespoons fat	
1/4 cup tomato sauce (if desired)	
1/8 teaspoon pepper (if desired)	

Soak beans in water overnight. Drain. Place in water and cook over moderate heat until tender. Cut ham and salt pork into small pieces and sauté well. Add fat. Chop and add onion, pepper, tomato, and garlic. Cook for a few minutes and add to the beans. Add salt and cook slowly until most of the water is evaporated.

Serve with boiled rice, cooked dry.

(The typical way of eating rice and beans is to serve a helping of the white rice, topping it with a liberal portion of the stewed beans.)

Rice and beans is Puerto Rico's native dish and is served once or twice a day. Though the favorite bean for this dish is the red kidney bean, it may be substituted in this recipe by:

navy beans
garbanzos - (chick peas)
lentejas - (lentils)
frijoles - (cowpeas)
gandules - (pigeon peas)

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FLAN DE PIÑA

(Baked Pineapple Custard)

1 cup pineapple juice
1 cup sugar
4 - 6 eggs

Add sugar to pineapple juice and cook to a syrup. Let cool. Measure syrup and for each cup add 4 beaten eggs. Mix well and strain. Cover mold with caramelized sugar and pour in mixture. Bake as a custard.

Number of servings - six.

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FLAN

(Glazed Puerto Rican Custard)

1 quart of milk or	2 - 2-1/2 cups sugar
1 can evaporated milk	Grated lemon rind or
1 can water	vanilla
10 - 12 eggs	Dash of salt

Stir eggs well but do not beat. Add milk, sugar, salt and seasoning. Strain. Pour into mold covered with caramelized sugar. Bake in pan containing water or cook in double boiler. When done allow to cool before removing from mold. It should hold its shape when removed from mold.

BIEN ME SABE

(Tasty to me)

1 coconut	2 cups sugar
4 egg yolks	2/3 cup water

Grate or grind the coconut. Add one cup hot water and squeeze out the milk. Boil sugar and water until syrup threads from tines of fork. Mix coconut milk and beaten yolks. Strain. Add syrup to egg mixture slowly and cook in double boiler or over very low flame. Serve this over slices of sponge cake.

ZURULLOS

(Caribbean Corn Sticks)

1 cup corn meal	1/2 cup milk
2 tablespoons flour	1 tablespoon fat
1 teaspoon salt	1/2 cup grated cheese

Mix and sift corn meal, flour and salt. Add milk and butter to make a dough. Add grated cheese and mix well. Shape into sticks about three inches long and one inch thick with pointed ends. Fry in deep fat.

Makes about nine sticks.

MAIZ CON COCO

(Coconut Corn)

1/2 cup corn meal	2 cups milk from dried
1/2 cup sugar	coconuts
1/8 teaspoon salt	2 sticks cinnamon

Mix the coconut milk, with corn meal and sugar. Place in double boiler or over low flame until it begins to thicken. Add salt and cinnamon. Cook slowly until done. Serve in dishes and let cool. Serve as a dessert with powdered cinnamon on top.

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